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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000788

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/WE: LEVIN; DRL/IRF: HUSER; AF/SPG: RAAD; AF/E;
AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRF PHUM PREL SU VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN BULLISH ON BISHOPS' PARTICIPATION IN SUDAN

REF: A. RAAD - MARTIN FEB 18 EMAIL

[B](#). VATICAN 594

[C](#). 03 VATICAN 5669

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) HOLY SEE COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR SUDAN LUCIO SEMBRANO TOLD US FEBRUARY 25 THAT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN THE DARFUR TALKS WOULD BE A KEY TO THEIR LONG-TERM SUCCESS. HE DESCRIBED REPORTS OF ATROCITIES IN THE REGION, AND OUTLINED THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S CAPACITY TO AID REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT. ON THE NORTH-SOUTH CONFLICT, SEMBRANO REITERATED THE HOLY SEE'S DESIRE FOR THE GOS TO ALLOW THE SUDANESE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE A GREATER ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND IN WORK ON THE CONSTITUTION, WHILE WE NOTED THE NEED TO START SLOWLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DELICATE BALANCE OF SUCH EFFORTS. ON INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE MORE GENERALLY, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THE SUDANESE BISHOPS ARE READY TO ENGAGE, AND JUST NEED AN OPENING FROM THE GOS AND SUDANESE MUSLIM AUTHORITIES. THOUGH POST CANNOT GAUGE THE MINDSET OF THE BISHOPS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE HOLY SEE HAS CREATED A DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE FOR DIALOGUE, WITH THE CREATION OF GABRIEL WAKO AS CARDINAL AND PAPAL PRESSURE ON THE BISHOPS DURING THEIR QUINQUENNIAL "AD LIMINA" VISIT TO ROME IN DECEMBER (REF C). END SUMMARY.

DARFUR

[1](#)2. (SBU) HOLY SEE COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR SUDAN LUCIO SEMBRANO CONTACTED EMBASSY FEBRUARY 25 AND FOLLOWED UP ON FOREIGN MINISTER GIOVANNI LAJOLO'S DEMARCHE TO THE AMBASSADOR A WEEK EARLIER (REF B). ON DARFUR, SEMBRANO SAID HE HAD RECEIVED REPORTS FROM NGOS THAT MARAUDING GANGS IN THE REGION MAY HAVE USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS ON THEIR VICTIMS. ACCORDING TO SEMBRANO, WITNESSES HAVE SEEN EVIDENCE OF SUCH WEAPONS ON VICTIMS' BODIES. SEMBRANO ALSO EMPHASIZED THE HOLY SEE'S VIEW THAT WIDER PARTICIPATION IN THE DARFUR TALKS WOULD HELP CREATE A MORE STABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT. HE SAID IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE BUY-IN TO THE AGREEMENT FROM SOME SEEKING TO DISRUPT THE PROCESS. TURNING TO HUMANITARIAN AID AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN DARFUR, SEMBRANO SAID THE HOLY SEE WAS WORKING THROUGH ITS DEVELOPMENT ARM, COR UNUM, WITH THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR). WHEN PRESSED FOR WHAT OTHER CONCRETE ASSISTANCE THE HOLY SEE COULD GIVE TO SUCH EFFORTS (REF A), HE SAID IT WAS SOMEWHAT LIMITED. SEMBRANO NOTED THAT SOME TWENTY CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES WERE ACTIVE IN HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE REGION, AND WERE IN CONTACT WITH THE SUDAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE. BUT THE CONFERENCE ITSELF HAD LITTLE MONEY, AND COULD CONTRIBUTE MAINLY THROUGH COMMUNICATION IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. WITH FEW CHRISTIANS IN DARFUR, THE LATTER STRATEGY WOULD HAVE LIMITED IMPACT, HE ACKNOWLEDGED.

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE

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14. (SBU) SEMBRANO TOLD US HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY RECENT ADVANCES IN INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE MORE GENERALLY, AND SAID HE HAD HEARD NO NEWS OF PROGRESS ON A NEW INTER-RELIGIOUS AGENCY IN SUDAN FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AID PROPOSED BY THE POPE IN DECEMBER (REF C). HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SUDANESE BISHOPS WERE READY AND WILLING TO ENGAGE WITH MUSLIM INTERLOCUTORS. WHEN REMINDED OF PAST HESITANCY ON THE BISHOPS' PART TO TRUST THEIR ERSTWHILE PERSECUTORS AND MOVE FORWARD, SEMBRANO ADMITTED IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT ROAD. "BUT THE SITUATION IS DIFFERENT NOW," HE SAID. "THEY HAVE A CARDINAL (GABRIEL WAKO) NOW, AND A BETTER IDEA OF THE DIRECTION IN WHICH (THE PEACE AGREEMENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES) ARE GOING." WE SUGGESTED THAT, GIVEN THE PERCEPTION THAT THE BISHOPS HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN READY FOR DIALOGUE, THEY NEEDED TO MAKE OVERTURES TO SIGNAL THEIR OPENNESS. SEMBRANO SAID HE WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO DO SO.

COMMENT: A DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE?

15. (SBU) WITH THE CREATION OF GABRIEL WAKO AS CARDINAL, AND PAPAL PRESSURE ON THE BISHOPS DURING THEIR QUINQUENNIAL "AD

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MINIMIZE CONSIDERED
HARDT

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